



PAT QUINN
Governor

MICHAEL T. McRAITH
Director

Illinois Department of Insurance

NEWS

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CONTACTS:

Anjali Julka (312) 814-0093

Louis G. Pukelis (312) 814-0778

Zion insurance agent pleads guilty to bilking 22 Lake County businesses of fraudulent premiums

Illinois Department of Insurance unravels \$400,000 workers' compensation scheme

CHICAGO – Reuben Collier Jr. of Zion pleaded guilty this month to four Class 3 felony charges in Lake County Court, the Illinois Department of Insurance announced today. Collier, an insurance agent licensed by the Department, operated Collier Insurance Agency based in Waukegan. Working with the Waukegan Police Department and the Lake County State's Attorney's office, Department investigators concluded that Mr. Collier's fabricated false insurance certificates for 22 north suburban businesses and bilked clients for approximately \$400,000 that he used for personal expenses.

"Workers' compensation fraud imposes unnecessary cost on employers and employees, and will be investigated and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law," said Michael T. McRaith, Director of the Illinois Department of Insurance. "We commend the Waukegan Police and the Lake County State's Attorney for the great work and successful collaboration that led to this conviction."

According to Department investigators, Collier "willfully forged hundreds" of insurance certificates, misrepresenting that client payments for premiums had been forwarded to insurers for coverage.

Department and Waukegan Police Department investigators found that many of Collier's clients paid Collier in cash for worker compensation coverage, and that Collier told those clients that lower premiums paid reflected a discount because of the cash payment. Bogus policies were renewed when clients' policy periods were near or past the lapse deadline, with clients visiting Collier personally to make cash payments. When his clients would need additional proof of insurance for a specific project, Collier created a fraudulent certificate.

As a result of his guilty plea, Collier was sentenced to 30 months probation with the following conditions:

- Serve a term of periodic imprisonment and follow all rules of periodic imprisonment; for a period of 12 months, two of which shall be served as periodic imprisonment and 10 months shall be served on electronic home monitoring;

- The defendant shall be released for work; specifically defendant may be released as necessary for his limousine work assignments, and his license service business;
- Make restitution in the total amount of \$97,136 divided among 24 separate victims;
- Subject to random urine and breathalyzer testing; and,
- Provide a DNA sample for testing.

The Department's workers' compensation fraud unit was created in the worker's compensation reform law passed in 2005. Throughout the State, Department investigators work with local law enforcement and prosecutors, as well as the office of Attorney General. The objective of the Department's investigative efforts is to reduce the instances of workers' compensation fraud and, thereby, improve the cost of premiums for employers and the claims-settlement process for injured workers.

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